



Habitat is where it's at!

November 2015



We hope you enjoy reading about the adventures of the **Green River Region** personnel as they work to *Conserve Wildlife and Serve People!*

HUNTIN' SEASON WINDS DOWN

Although *elk hunting season* was tough this year for some hunters in southwest Wyoming, due to warm and dry weather conditions, Green River check station workers saw a fair amount of elk, pronghorn antelope, mountain grouse, and a few moose. There are still *late elk hunting opportunities*, as well as plenty of opportunities to hunt *small game, mountain lions, upland game birds, waterfowl and furbearer animal trapping*. Please remember that the trapping season for bobcat does not open until November 15. As always, please refer to the regulations for any species you wish to hunt or trap for.

Green River Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes checks a nice bull elk (*photo below*) and a very happy young elk hunter. (*photo below, right*)

Special dates and points of interest:

- DON'T HAVE A COMPUTER? EVERY REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE GAME AND FISH HAS A COMPUTER AT THE FRONT COUNTER FOR PUBLIC USE.
- DON'T HAVE YOUR HUNTER SAFETY CERTIFICATE? CHECK FOR UPCOMING COURSES ONLINE AT [HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).
- REMEMBER: YOU CAN BUY ALL YOUR HUNTING LICENSES, REQUIRED STAMPS AND MANY MORE PRODUCTS AT THE WGFD WEBSITE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN COMPUTER!
- HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM (HIP) PERMITS ARE FREE BUT THEY ARE ONLY AVAILABLE ONLINE AT THE WGFD WEBSITE.
- LOST YOUR HUNTER EDUCATION CARD? YOU CAN PRINT AS MANY COPIES OF YOUR CARD AS YOU WANT, FOR FREE, AT THE WGFD WEBSITE.



Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge cottonwood transects ~ D.E.E.R. Project



Aquatic Habitat Biologist Kevin Spence (photo immediate right), WLCI Coordinator James Wasseen (second from left in far left photo), Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge Manager Tom Koerner (brown jacket in far left photo) and SNWR Biologist Adam Halverson (far left person in far left photo) conduct cottonwood transects to determine the quality of multiple cottonwood stands on the refuge. Spence and crew also determined which animals have been browsing on the cottonwoods; leading to future wildlife or livestock management actions.



Helicopter pilot lowers a captured mule deer down to crews on the ground where the deer will be processed.



(photo left) Habitat Biologist Kevin Spence (left) and Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes (right) get ready to take a mule deer out of the capture net. Muley Fanatic Co-founder Joey Faigl (right rear) gets ready to take biological data from the deer as part of the Deer Elk Ecology Research (D.E.E.R.) Project. Researchers Matt Hayes and Kevin Monteith from the UW Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit are assisting with the deer and elk capture and satellite collar placement on all captured animals. There are many researchers associated with UW, as well as Green River Game and Fish biologists. Researcher Sam Dwinell releases an elk (photo below left) and a collar deer seems to fly by as it is released. (photo below)



2015 Hunting Seasons and happy hunters around southwest Wyoming

Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru said hunters this fall were very pleased with the number of animals they saw and the size of the animals they saw. "Even though it was another fall of mild weather, hunters still took quite a few animals," Deru said. I saw the rare site of wild turkeys by Meeks cabin dam, which is around 8500 feet in elevation. There were six turkeys running together."

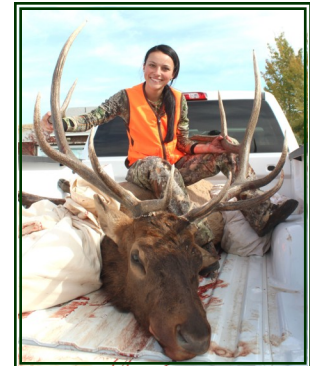
"I recorded *a few more violations* this year for over limits, failure to tag, and waste of big game, compared to last year. Also, there were a LOT of spoiled animals due to the hot weather. One nice thing about this season was a fewer number of shot and left two point deer were discovered. Overall the hunting season has been good so far and people are still harvesting a few cow elk on the antler-less General hunt," Deru said.

Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson reported the deer season was very busy with many trespass calls and many happy hunters who harvested many deer. "It turned out to be a very good year, just as we had predicted," Olson said. "Along with the average problems, I had several unique cases this fall. It isn't every day I get called to a 911 hang-up call from a hunting camp and end up in the midst of what turns out to be kidnapping charges. And I am wrapping up a hunting while intoxicated case, that is another first for me. It was a crazy October. On a happy note, I talked to many happy hunters."

Mountain View Wildlife Biologist Jeff Short reported that quite a few deer were checked at the Evanston check station. "Most harvested deer were 2.5 year old, 3 point bucks," short said. "Youth hunters had good harvest success with any deer regulations for them making hunting easier. All in all, hunters still had good success due to good deer numbers in most areas. Participation late in the deer season still seemed to be fairly low, but I felt that there were more hunters out there late in the season than in recent years. I think it was due to the wonderful weather for camping and hiking."

"**Our elk opener** was saw unseasonably warm and dry weather," Short said. "This continued through the whole season. Normally hunters are battling rain, snow, mud and ice to hunt elk in the mountains. This year it was warm with clear skies. On the opener and opening weekend there were a lot of hunters in the hills. They were enjoying the nice weather even though it made hunting a little more difficult. "

"**Hunters that ventured into the back-country** had good luck getting into elk," Short said. "I checked far more hunters in the back-country this year than usual." I think the nice weather and not having to fight snow at higher elevations made it appealing to get away from the roads. During the beginning of the hunt there was quite a bit of bugling activity by bulls. This is unusual and the hunters that encountered it had a lot of fun. As the season continued, hunter participation really dropped off. Most hunters pulled their camps after the first weekend."



2015 Hunting Seasons and happy hunters around southwest Wyoming





Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas took the above photo near Red Canyon, west of Big Piney, of a radio collared doe with her two radio collared fawns. "The whole radio collared family was migrating south, but I didn't realize it in time to get my camera out before they rolled over the ridge," Hymas said. Cool photo, Neil!



Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas reported that October weather was reasonably moderate in the Cokeville area. "Deer hunters found deer numbers good and observed a fair number of antlered deer, despite warm and dry hunting conditions that gave deer an advantage. At this time, it is probable that overall deer hunting success will be higher than in recent years. A fair number of large trophy sized bucks were taken throughout the area," Hymas said.

"Antelope hunters also experienced a good year overall," Hymas said. "Antelope hunts in the western part of the region continue to be popular with nonresident hunters, and drawing a license is a bit harder than in the past. Due to changes in land ownership and use, holders of Antelope Hunt Area 100 Type 7 Reduced Price Doe Fawn licenses found access more limited in the southern end of the hunt area. This license will be evaluated closely by managers in upcoming years."

"Moose hunters appeared at this time to have had very good success rates, and many were able to harvest good sized bulls," Hymas said. "In Hunt Area 26, managers have been monitoring harvest closely since increasing the number of antlered moose permits to 50 licenses. From field observations it appears that success rates have remained high with many quality bulls taken by moose hunters."

A mule deer research project being conducted by the Wyoming University COOP unit continues. Information on fawn mortality is being collected as it becomes available. In the photographs below, research team leader Samantha Dwinell documents a fawn mortality in early November in the Chapel Creek area north of Cokeville, and then packs the carcass out so that a necropsy can determine the cause of the fawn's death. (photos top right)

Unfortunate over-limit of moose ~ Other enforcement efforts



Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts responded to a landowner complaint about several elk carcasses illegally dumped on his private property. "This landowner has much of his land enrolled in a Hunter Management Area and is very generous about allowing access outside of hunting seasons," Roberts said. "The majority of people using the HMA's are responsible citizens. Please report this type of activity to your game warden so we all do not loose access to these types of access areas due to the acts of a few."

The carcasses were cleaned up and properly disposed of at the landfill. Proper disposal of game carcasses *varies by community*. In some areas, carcasses are hauled away with the regular trash. Some cities require that hunters deliver carcasses to a special landfill, or to municipal dumpsters specifically for carcasses. Hunters are urged to contact their *local sanitation department* for disposal instructions.

Evanston Game Wardens Nick Roberts and PLPW Southwest Access Coordinator Andy Countryman responded to a report of an Evanston youth who shot two bull moose on one license south of Evanston.

“Unfortunately the youth and his mother chose not to take responsibility for shooting the second moose,” game warden Roberts said. “After salvaging the meat and head of the first moose, they chose to leave the second injured moose in the willows along the Bear River. Both the mother of the youth and the youth shooter told several witnesses at the scene not to tell anyone about the second injured moose.”

"Thankfully one of the witnesses did choose to report the incident. However, 48 hours had passed since the moose was shot and the meat had spoiled. Both the youth and the mother plead guilty to taking an over limit of big game animal and the waste of a big game animal. They will both lose their hunting privileges for two years were ordered to pay \$7,500 in restitution along with court costs. "*(photos top of page)*

Enforcement Happenings

There are unsolved poaching cases in the Green River Region. If you have any information about any wildlife violation please contact your local game warden or the **STOP**

Poaching Hotline at:
1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847)

- You can also report a wildlife violation at the WGFD website <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>

More enforcement efforts and encounters with happy hunters ~ Be Bear-Wise!

Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird reported that for him, it was a very busy year for law enforcement. "I dealt with what seemed like an inordinate amount of trespass violations throughout my district," Baird said. "I investigated several blatant cases of people simply not taking the time to know where they were hunting and a few outright trespassing, with full knowledge of doing so. I encountered several tagging violations, investigated multiple unknown suspect waste cases, and handled several interagency off road violations. It seemed to be a busy season with lots of folks making poor choices."

"**Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas** and I investigated a case where a man killed a mule deer on the opening day," Baird said. "He decided that he wasn't ready to be done deer hunting and chose not to tag the deer. He also wasted quite a bit of meat at the kill site. The folks camped next to him witnessed him kill the deer and later found the carcass with the wasted meat. They reported the apparent violations to me in the field. Neil and I interviewed the suspect which revealed a deer head hidden under the camper trailer."

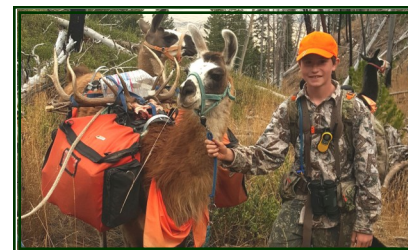
"**The suspect** insisted it was his niece's deer taken the last day of archery season. After three days of investigation, interviews, and deception the suspect admitted to shooting the deer, attempting to harvesting another, and to killing yet another "injured deer" he'd simply left altogether. The subject was charged with failing to tag a big game animal, taking an over-limit of deer, and wasting edible portions of a big game animal. The case is still pending in Lincoln County circuit court."

"**I also** investigated a report of someone hunting elk three days before the season opened in Lost Horse Creek," Baird said. "This area is very remote and difficult to get to. It is also accessible by three different trailheads on different sides of the mountain. On my second attempt to locate where the suspects may be camped I located a Green River resident who has Lou Gehrig's Disease and a disabled hunter permit. He had been hunting out of the same camp for nearly 40 years and this was what he thought would be his last year. His five adult sons packed him in and put on the elk. unfortunately he was not able to harvest a bull but was enjoying the time with his family. I was happy to report back to the reporting party that there was no violation."

"**The fuel canister** with holes in it is the work of an ornery black bear, Baird said." A hunter and USFS employee killed a deer a long way from the road and decided that he could not haul the deer and his back pack camp back in one trip. As it was so hot he opted to leave his backpack with all of his camping gear hanging about 25 feet up in a tree. The happy and tired hunter learned I would be in the area with a pack horse and asked if it wouldn't be too much trouble if I packed out his camp for him. I agreed and when I found his gear it was spread over a 100 square foot area. The bear had eaten anything remotely edible and destroyed all of his nice camping gear. Just a nice reminder to us all about bear safety!"



A hunter taking advantage of the early season **disabled hunter opportunity** in the Slate Creek area. His friends were helping him put the sneak on some does by carrying him what looked like about 100 yards. (*photo above*)



Kaden Kaiser and his first branch-antlered bull taken in Blue Jay Creek. His happy llama's packed it out for him. (*photo above*)



Bear "snack" fuel canister

Local school children learn from Trout Unlimited Adopt A Trout Program/G&F partnership



TU's Nick Walrath (center with hat) greets the first 200 middle school students for an October field trip to the Gorge. (Photos by Stacey Nelson.)



Green River I&E Specialist Lucy Wold takes students through a burbot anatomy and food web activity.



(photo left, up one from bottom) GR Fisheries Supervisor Robb Keith teaches students how to pull fish from the gill nets and collect weights and lengths of each fish to be used in the fisheries data base.

(photo immediate bottom, left) Green River High School Teacher Ali Baas (in blue jacket and orange hat) volunteers to assist with the field trip; some 400 students attended.

Don't be alarmed if you are fishing on the Green River and catch a brown trout or burbot with a long, wire tail dangling from the fish. Fisheries biologists with Trout Unlimited (TU) and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) recently tagged the fish to learn more about the two species.

"This is a one-year project in which we will tag 50 fish to learn more about the relationship between brown trout and burbot and get local school children involved in their management through TU's Adopt-A-Trout Program," said Nick Walrath TU Green River Project Manager. "We will study brown trout winter habitat and spawning areas and identify what competition there is with burbot. With the burbot, we will study their movement in the Green River to learn more about their relationship with Flaming Gorge and the river."

Anglers are asked to please release the tagged trout back in to the river as soon as possible. Angler assistance in this important fish study is very much appreciated.

TU has been conducting Adopt-A-Troup programs in Wyoming since 2007 and the program has been very well received because it gives students a real opportunity to assist with a hands-on scientific project in their own community. Students learn about the fish species and more about what fisheries biologists do to manage their local fishery.

"We could not conduct this research project without the financial help from many businesses," Walrath said. "Funding for this project was made possible thanks to Seedskaadee Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resources Trust, FMC, OCI and Rocky Mountain Power."

Green River Game and Fish biologists team up with Trout Unlimited/students to study trout



Photo above left to right: Chase Franklin, Nick Walrath, John Walrath and Hillary Walrath. John and Nick are not related, but you probably guessed Nick and Hillary are husband and wife.



Green River Fisheries Supervisor Robert Keith pulls up the burbot-loaded net.

Fisheries biologists with Trout Unlimited (TU) and the WGFD are inserting tags into trout and burbot as part of the TU Adopt A Trout Program. Green River area students will help track the fish using radio telemetry and keep actual data for research purposes. The fish are caught using electroshock equipment (photo above left) or a cod net (photo above right) A close up of the tags inserted into fish. (photo below)



TU biologists Hillary and Nick Walrath insert a tag into a trout caught on the Henry's Fork. (photo above)



Green River Fisheries Biologist John Walrath inserts a tag into a burbot caught on Flaming Gorge Reservoir. (photo above)



Once the fish is tagged and information on each individual fish is recorded the fish is released back into the water. (photo above)



Office manager Sheila Watts is holding up one of this year's most popular sales items in the WGFD gift case- the Wyoming land status GPS chip. You can buy this GPS chip from Sheila or Regina (that is, when she gets back from Hawaii) at the Green River Region Office or buy one online at the WGFD website.

<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>

Office Phone: 307-875-3223

Office Fax: 307-875-3242

Toll Free In-State 1-800-843-8096

Conserving Wildlife-Serving People

We are on the web! <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>



stay connected



~Critter Spotlight~

Western screech owl

By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold

- One of two screech owl species found in Wyoming (the other being the eastern screech owl), these small, stocky owls are typically found west of the Continental Divide in Wyoming. Eastern screeches are found only in extreme southeastern and northern Wyoming east of the Divide.
- Unlike the eastern screech owl which occurs in two color phases (or morphs; rufous and grey), the western screech owl only occurs in the grey form.
- Western screech owls are an "eared or horned" owl, but can be distinguished from the much larger great-horned or long-eared owls by size and voice, and from eastern screech owls by voice and heavy vertical streaks on breast feathers.
- The accelerating whistled call of this small owl is easily imitated, and individuals respond readily to imitated calls, often almost to hand. While this species does have a note that can be referred to as a "screech", it is rarely used and makes one wonder how they received their name.
- Western screech owls can be found in a wide range of habitats, ranging from wooded riparian to montane habitats to juniper or large shrub dominated landscapes. Western screeches occur in both remote and urban habitats.
- Like most small owls, the western screech owl has a varied diet ranging from large insects to small birds and mammals. The author has observed this species hunting and catching bats near street lamps.